UNITED
NATIONS

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General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

A/51/654
S/1996/909
4 November 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-first session
Agenda item 39
THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR
INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND
SECURITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-first year

Identical letters dated 4 November 1996 from the Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Further to my letter dated 18 October 1996 (A/51/527-S/1996/863), I have the honour to bring the following to your urgent attention:

The Islamic State of Afghanistan, since the beginning of the conflict in the capital, Kabul, and some other provinces in the country in 1994, has sent numerous communications to you on one of the main causes behind the continuation of conflict in Afghanistan, virtually all of which, upon the request of the Government of Afghanistan, have been circulated as official documents of either the Security Council or the General Assembly.

It is noteworthy that the common notion in these letters has all along been a sharp focus on the intervention of Pakistani circles, especially the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), and its direct involvement in the conflict in Afghanistan, which the United Nations is yet to identify expressly. This dereliction was justified by some United Nations authorities merely by stipulating a "lack of hard evidence". This observation proved to be utterly counter-productive to the efforts of the United Nations to bring the Pakistani intervention to a halt. Continued reports made by the Islamic State of Afghanistan of having in its custody many captured Pakistani elements did not find support in the United Nations. Further, a similar response met requests to send a fact-finding mission to Afghanistan to investigate reports regarding the Pakistani intervention.

However, the recent, unanimously adopted, Security Council resolution 1076 (1996) of 22 October 1996, in which the Council for the first time referred, in its paragraph 3, to the "involvement of foreign military personnel" in Afghanistan, has won satisfaction and appreciation throughout the world.

Today, the preceding description is a major disclosure in a long-standing mystery. For the first time, the Islamic State of Afghanistan can point to the coming to light of "hard evidence" of the actual and physical involvement of armed Pakistani soldiers captured after the recent onslaught of the Taliban on the capital, Kabul. An independent journalist, Edward Barnes, after travelling to Panjshir Valley, interviewed captured Pakistani soldiers in a prison. This interview, which is published along with photographic evidences in Time magazine of 4 November 1996 (see annex), indicates, inter alia, that from among 26 captured Pakistanis, 2 Pakistani captured soldiers were interviewed. Khalid Mohammad Zai, 22, one of the two, who described himself as a member of a Pakistan Islamic paramilitary unit based in Kulty Chawni in Pakistan's Punjab province, says that "his unit was under the control of ISI", Pakistan's military intelligence, and his mission, as it was explained to him and 1,000 other Pakistani fighters who entered Afghanistan during the past two months, was to "go as a fighter and rise to a high position of influence". According to Khalid Mohammad Zai, "he was transported across the border by Pakistani military vehicles and, once in Kabul, received orders and money from 13 senior Pakistani officers in Kabul on 27 September 1996". He says that he was captured on 13 October 1996 near the Salang Pass.

There are scores of reliable reports that the Taliban prevents foreign correspondents from visiting the Taliban's front lines around Kabul. Our knowledge is that it is all done for fear that Pakistani-brand military hardware deployed by Pakistanis fighting against the government forces will be unveiled.

On behalf of the victimized Afghan nation, whose outcry is long due to be heard, I submit the above "hard evidence" through you to the United Nations as a beacon of hope of the small oppressed and suffering members of this global family and earnestly expect the following:

1. On the basis of the inquiries and reports of independent correspondents with regard to the existence of the direct military involvement of Pakistan in Afghanistan, and in accordance with the findings of the United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan, mandated by the Security Council in paragraph 13 of its resolution 1076 (1996) to report on the political, military and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan, the Council has to determine whether there was a breach of the peace and an act of aggression committed by Pakistan against Afghanistan and to decide upon measures to be taken against the aggressor, in conformity with the provision of Chapter VII, Article 39, of the Charter of the United Nations.

2. To achieve the above, Dr. Norbert Holl, head of the United Nations Special Mission on Afghanistan, is expected to inspect the area promptly and to include in his report to the Security Council and to the General Assembly his inquiries and findings regarding the Pakistani military personnel captured by armed forces of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, which is a turning point in

the identification of the actual cause of the continuation of conflict in Afghanistan.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan is of the conviction that the above would result in disclosing a factor that has constituted a major element behind the continuation of the conflict and bloodshed in the country and that has been an obstacle to the efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to bring peace and complete stability to war-ravaged Afghanistan.

The above reality, in the meantime, proves the fact that the Taliban militia group has captured the capital, Kabul, and in earlier times, some other provinces, through the direct military involvement of Pakistan. The Taliban, therefore, according to internationally accepted norms, should have no recognized identity other than as a mercenary group and a product of foreign intervention and should therefore not be treated in a manner that would give it the impression that it has been tolerated by the world community.

I would also like to bring to your attention that the Taliban mercenaries have no representative character. They are confronting a mass movement of resistance in the country. However, the Taliban's different personalities have continuously expressed their rejectionist views towards the United Nations peace process. No Government of the Taliban exists. The declarations of some of its personalities are denied, or at least not confirmed, by the other Taliban.

In addition to the massive and systematic violation of human rights by the Taliban, especially women's right, many of its personalities have rejected outright the principles of democracy, including free election, as being against their ideology (see Al-Mujallah, Arabic magazine, dated 16 October 1996).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 39, and of the Security Council.

I wish to express my gratitude for your utmost desire for the restoration of complete peace and stability in Afghanistan.

(Signed) Abdul Rahim GHAFOORZAI
Acting Foreign Minister

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ANNEX

Article published in Time on 4 November 1996

WORLD

Friends of the Taliban

As fighting nears Kabul, two POWs tell TIME that Pakistan sent soldiers to help the extreme Islamists

By EDWARD BARNES PANJSHIR VALLEY

THE 26 MEN SIT IN GRIM ISOLATION, huddled in a darkened cell of a former Soviet-built prison deep in northern Afghanistan's Panjshir Valley. They are sequestered from nearly 600 other prisoners, but even if they were allowed to mingle, they would still stand apart. The style of their clothes, the color of their skin, their very language mark them as outsiders. They are not Afghans. They are Pakistanis, captured while fighting against the forces of the Afghan government that was driven from the capital five weeks ago by the group of Islamic fighters known as the Taliban. The presence of these foreign supporters of the Taliban, claim officials at the prison, is hard proof that Pakistan, a U.S. ally, has arrogated for itself a more extensive role in Afghanistan's war than has ever been acknowledged.

IN JAIL: Pakistanis Zahid, left, and Zai acknowledged their mission

Even before the Taliban's victorious drive on Kabul, the ousted government had long insisted that the student-led band of Muslim warriors were actively backed by Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) and by some members of the country's powerful military. The motive: gaining some influence over a neighbor with whom it shares a long and exceedingly porous border. Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has denied any involvement, but in late September, Naseerullah Babar, Pakistan's Interior Minister, flew to Afghanistan to work out a settlement between the Taliban and the most powerful of the Afghan warlords. While that seemed to support suspicions, the stories told by several of the prisoners in the Panjshir, if true, would constitute the first direct evidence that Islamabad's involvement with the war-riven nation to the west extends to recruiting Pakistanis and paying them to fight alongside the Taliban.

Khalid Mohammed Zai, 22, was a member of an Islamic paramilitary unit, based in Kulty Chawni in Pakistan's Punjab province. He says his unit was under the control of the ISI, and his mission, as it was explained to him and 1,000 other Pakistani fighters he says entered Afghanistan during the past two months, was to "go as a fighter and rise to a high position of influence." He was transported across the border by Pakistani military vehicles and, once in Kabul, received orders and money from the senior Pakistani officer in Kabul, a man named Naser. Zai was in the forefront of the Taliban troops who swept into Kabul on Sept. 27 and pushed the armies of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the former government's army commander, into the hills surrounding the capital. Zai was captured Oct. 13 near the Salang Pass, the high-water mark of the Taliban effort to drive Massoud's forces from the region. The campaign turned disastrous when Massoud retreated until the Taliban had stretched their lines dangerously thin. Then the Lion of Panjshir turned and abruptly struck at their flanks, a tactic he had used many times against the Soviets.

The momentum of this counterattack carried Massoud's forces through the village of Charikar, where Mohammed Zahid Pashtun, 26, another Pakistani fighter, was stationed. A devout Muslim and former engineering student, Zahid says he signed up for combat duty with a Pakistani intelligence officer and was given 40 days of training. He eventually reached Charikar, where Afghan civilians, who initially welcomed the Taliban, revolted after just 11 days of repressive rule, outraged by a draconian regime that bars women from working outside the home. Also outlawed are movies, music and chess. Captured, he now says he regrets his role. "I heard and saw how the Taliban treated people. If I get home again, I will tell people that the Taliban are not true Islam."

While Massoud is eager to drive them out, the Taliban have sworn they will not leave Kabul. Massoud, an ethnic Tajik, is aided by the Taliban's plummeting popularity, but the key to his offensive is his tenuous alliance with Abdul Rashid Dostum, a powerful Uzbek warlord, who is with Massoud's forces battling the Taliban near Kabul. The tribal nature of the conflict has always complicated the fighting. Last week the Taliban, mostly ethnic Pashtun, were going house to house in Kabul in search of Tajiks and Uzbeks. Pakistan's meddling can only worsen the hostilities, and the lines of refugees will stretch deep into the winter. —*With reporting by Meenakshi Ganguly/New Delhi and Lewis M. Simons/Washington*